

and the Vietnam wars, and he spent nearly 7 years as a prisoner of war in Hanoi after he was shot down over Vietnam. I commend SAM JOHNSON for his tireless work to support America's men and women in uniform as well as for his efforts on behalf of all veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I also have much praise for another wonderful colleague, JOHN LEWIS. JOHN's record of fighting for civil rights and civil liberties dates back to the 1960s, when he was named chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and served as the youngest keynote speaker alongside Dr. Martin Luther King at the March on Washington in 1963.

Congressmen SAM JOHNSON and JOHN LEWIS have both lived lives of distinction, and I expect that tomorrow night's inaugural ceremony at the Library of Congress will be a great testament to their life of service.

#### PREVENTING CRIMES AGAINST VETERANS ACT

(Mr. ROONEY of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ROONEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of our Nation's veterans, who have been targeted by criminals seeking to defraud them.

Last year, veterans in my district brought to my attention that these individuals are advertising themselves to the veterans community, claiming that, for a fee, they can speed up their claims with the VA.

Now, everybody knows that the claims process at the VA is far too slow, but these people are deliberately seeking out veterans, purporting to speed up this process with their VA claims, which they cannot do, then illegally charging them exorbitant fees and then disappearing.

I introduced a bill with my fellow Floridian and neighbor, Democrat TED DEUTCH, titled the Preventing Crimes Against Veterans Act, to penalize these fraudsters who are blatantly engaging in a scheme to defraud our veterans.

Yes, that is true, these people prey on American veterans. So it is our duty to ensure that our heroes are protected under every aspect of the law. I am confident that this bill can pass the House with bipartisan support.

□ 1915

#### SENSIBLE WATER STORAGE

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I am heartened to see over the weekend in a Sacramento Bee article that California Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN has also called for pumping excess water that flows through the delta, despite opinions on endangered fish numbers.

We have been talking a long time about taking that excess water and

putting it aside in storage instead of just letting it run out to the ocean. I am a little frustrated we didn't get to that point earlier.

Back in December, we had a press conference and put forth legislation to acknowledge that we are losing water that could be put aside in other storage facilities for anybody to be able to use.

We are looking forward to working with Senator FEINSTEIN on this and bringing forward sensible water storage with water we already have in these high-flow times.

#### REMEMBERING TIFFANY JOSLYN

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise with great sadness and overwhelming grief to acknowledge the passing of my beloved staff member, Tiffany Joslyn.

As we return to Washington, I did not want one day to pass without a tribute to her, although I will return again with more details and more expressions of how talented she was.

Tiffany died Saturday, March 5, in a very tragic car accident while traveling between Rhode Island and Massachusetts, having gone home to mourn with her family on the passing of a relative.

The greatest tragedy of all is that not only did Tiffany lose her life, but her beloved only brother died and his wife was injured in the same accident.

I come today to acknowledge her light and to tell her parents of the great respect Tiffany has garnered throughout the Washington community and beyond.

She was a brilliant writer. She served as Deputy Chief Counsel of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations of the House Judiciary Committee.

Republicans and Democrats loved her well. She had the kind of spirit, generosity, and eagerness to get the job done that everyone loved.

Tiffany had a passion to help the most vulnerable and those who were caught up in the criminal justice system unfairly, but also those who deserved restoration and rehabilitation. Together we were on a journey to continue to find a way to reform the criminal justice system.

She made great progress. Two of the bills we worked on have already passed out of the Judiciary Committee, and I am praying that they come to the floor not only in her name, but in the names of all the vulnerable people that would benefit from her great work.

To her family, this tragedy is so enormous that words cannot comfort, but you should know that your daughter and your late son were lights to so many. May good bless them as they rest in peace, for they left a legacy. It will go on and on.

I am ever grateful for the opportunity to work with Tiffany, a young

woman with a big heart and maybe even an old soul. She had a lot to give and a lot of intellect to make a difference in this world.

#### GENOCIDE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, we are living in a time of great political difficulty. That is not a secret to anyone.

Just moments ago the House of Representatives did something essential. We came together not in a bipartisan fashion, but in a trans-partisan fashion, rising above the petty difficulties that we seemingly cannot ever resolve, and spoke to the heart of something that is essential for all of humanity. We declared together what is happening in the Middle East to Christians, Yazidis, and others to be genocide.

I am extraordinarily proud of this body for speaking clearly, for speaking factually, and for speaking about this grave injustice that is happening to so many ancient faith traditions.

This is a grave injustice, and it is an assault on human dignity. This grave injustice is a threat to civilization itself when one group of persons, namely, ISIS, can systematically target another group of persons because of their faith.

That destroys the very basis for international order, tranquility among people, and for civilization itself. That is why what we did tonight in speaking so clearly and rising above differences in a unanimous fashion is so extraordinary.

I owe an extreme debt of gratitude to my colleague, ANNA ESHOO from California. ANNA has been a stalwart leader in this effort. Her own ethnic background is Chaldean. She has an intimate familiarity with the Middle East and the suffering of this group of people.

ANNA has led Congress on her side of the aisle and my side of the aisle, in partnership with me, to continue to try to confront the scandal of silence, the indifference toward what is happening to these ancient faith traditions that have as much a right to be in their ancestral homeland as anyone else.

In June of 2014, in the Iraqi city of Mosul, there was an eerie silence one morning. For the first time in two millennia, the church bells didn't ring.

Mosul is one of those diverse cities in the Middle East. It had a rich tapestry, a vibrancy of various faith traditions: Christians, Yazidis, Muslims.

There were differences of religious perspectives, sometimes tension, but they found a way to continue to contribute an interdependency toward the well-being of that community.

They were invaded by eighth century barbarians with 21st century weaponry:

ISIS. The Christians who were there were told to leave, convert, or die by the sword.

Many fled with just what was on their back. The remaining Christians in the homes had this painted on their door. This is the Arabic symbol for the letter N.

It stands for Nazarene, which is a derogatory term used by some in the Middle East to describe the Christians. This was painted on their door as a sign that it was time for them to go or they would die, except it wasn't painted in nice gold like this. It was painted blood red.

We have so many tragedies and difficulties facing humanity, we can sometimes become numb to the violence that is happening in so many places in the world because it is overwhelming.

But when you have one group of people who has extreme disregard for that sacred space of humanity, for that sacred space of conscience and individual rights that are expressed in religious freedom, you not only have a threat to a group of people far away, but you have a threat to the underpinnings of civilization itself.

I happened to be in the room when Pope Francis was given a small Christian cross, a crucifix. This cross had belonged to a young Syrian man. He had been captured by the jihadists.

He was told: Convert or die. So he chose. He chose his ancient faith tradition. He chose Christ. He was beheaded. His mother was somehow able to recover his body and this cross and bury him. She fled and came to Austria. Through this means, the small cross came into the possession of the Holy Father.

This is not an isolated story. It has happened over and over and over again, as persons who were denied their life or denied the very conditions for life and they had to flee. This is called genocide.

The International Association of Genocide Scholars, the prestigious academic body, has labeled this genocide. Genocide Watch has called this genocide. The Yazidi international community has labeled this a genocide. Pope Francis has said so. Presidential candidates on both sides of the aisle have said so. Now the House of Representatives has declared it so as well.

I live in Lincoln, Nebraska, and I am privileged to represent the largest Yazidi community in America. It is not a community that I have gotten to know just recently because of all the difficulties that they have had. We have worked with them for many, many years.

Many of these Yazidi families were translators for the United States Army during the height of the Iraq war. Because of that, this body, by law, gave them special citizenship options to live here in America, and many settled in Lincoln, Nebraska.

About a year and a half ago, a number of young men in the Yazidi commu-

nity came to see me. They were on the verge of tears.

They spoke passionately, even angrily—and I don't blame them for being angry—Congressman, do something. Our mothers, our sisters, our families, are trapped in Sinjar and ISIS is coming for them. We don't have the capacity to stop them. Help us. You are the only ones who can. Help us. Please, do something. There is no more time.

The Yazidi community also took its case to Washington. Around the same time a resolution that was led by my good friend, Congressman VARGAS, who will speak momentarily, and passed by us in the House of Representatives, which called for international humanitarian assistance in northern Iraq for the besieged people, laid some of the groundwork, which was a very prudent decision—and I commend President Obama for it—to stopping what was certain to be a slaughter on Mount Sinjar, saving the remnants of the Yazidi people who were still there.

So today we, as a body, are calling upon the international community as well as the fullness of our own government to act and to call this genocide.

This is one of those Yazidi translators. His name is Omar. Again, he gained his citizenship because he was so sacrificially helpful to us during the height of the Iraq war. He has lost 36 family members of the Yazidi community to the violence.

He recently went back to the liberated areas of Sinjar and saw the bombed remains of the ancient Christian church here. He took it upon himself—a Yazidi man that does not share the Christian tradition—to put a makeshift cross over the site where the Christians previously lived.

Why is this genocide designation important? It is just to Omar and his family. It is just to the Christians who died or had to flee. It is just to the other people who are under severe persecution. By the way, I should note that the people who have been killed the most by ISIL are innocent Muslims.

The genocide declaration, though, declares that there is a systematic attempt to exterminate this ancient faith tradition of the Christians, Yazidis, and others.

What it means is we are helping set the preconditions, if you will, for when there is, hopefully, a real security settlement in northern Iraq and in Syria and in other places and that the Christians, Yazidis, and others are fully integrated back into their ancient homeland and given fullness of rights as citizens, given fullness of protection and process, full integration into their own governance structures.

□ 1930

By raising this banner tonight, I think we have done something good. It is a word, but it is a powerful word.

In 2004, Colin Powell, then-Secretary of State, came to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and he declared there what was happening in Darfur to

be a genocide. In doing so, it helped put an end to that grim reality.

So today the House has spoken, and I am proud that we have done so in a bipartisan manner, with unanimity. What I hope this does is, again, elevate international consciousness, calling upon the responsible communities of the world to seek out constructive, creative ways to help stop the violence, to help stop the persecution, to push for the right type of security arrangements that will restore what was once the rich tapestry of diversity of perspectives and beliefs in the Middle East.

Without that, I have little hope. But with this, and the return of persons like Omar and others who respect differences, who have true friendships, who are willing to sacrifice for their deep beliefs, these are the nobility of values that the ancient traditions can bring back to their shattered homeland; and that is why it is so important that we acted today.

Mr. Speaker, let me turn to, again, my good friend from California (Ms. ESHOO), who has worked tirelessly on this resolution and wants to share her thoughts as well tonight.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Nebraska, the very distinguished Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank him for his words and for his magnificent remarks here on the floor this evening. We obviously share the same sentiments.

I think if anyone is tuned in this evening for what we call a Special Order, the Congress is not really held in great regard today, but there is on a day-to-day basis for so many of us a discovery of deep friendship that is created, that comes about because we work so closely together on something that binds us, where we have not only common ground, but the deep, deep values of our country that are embedded in us and everyone here, people across the country, and that we get to work on it together.

Congressman FORTENBERRY is my brother, and I thank him. I thank him from the bottom of my heart for the values that he has expressed, the work that he has put into this, and what it means to the people that we are speaking for.

This resolution expresses the sense of the Congress that the atrocities that are being perpetrated by ISIS, they constitute war crimes, and they are genocide against religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria and throughout the region.

Now, over the past decade we have really witnessed an acceleration. It started when there was the invasion of Iraq, but it has heightened as the years have gone on. And now the assault on Christians and other religious minorities, particularly by ISIS, has moved to a level of barbarism that we read about in the history books, and is taking place, imagine, in the 21st century.

It has included the torture and the murder of thousands, the displacement

of millions, including Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Armenians, Turkmen, Sabea-Mandaeans, Kaka'e, Amalekites, and the Yazidis that Mr. FORTENBERRY has spoken to and represents so magnificently. These are families that are being torn apart, fathers and sons being executed, mothers and daughters being enslaved and raped.

The USA Today columnist, Kirsten Powers, painted a very vivid picture when she wrote in December of last year:

In October, Islamic State militants in Syria demanded that two Christian women and six men convert to Islam. When they refused, the women were publicly raped, and then beheaded along with the men. On the same day, militants cut off the fingertips of a 12-year old boy in an attempt to force his Christian father to convert. When his father refused, they were brutalized and they were both crucified.

Today, there are fewer than 500 Christians remaining in Iraq, down from as many as 1.5 million in 2003.

Now, the United Nations has written, come up with a definition some time ago of what genocide actually is:

Any of the following acts committed with an intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

This is genocide, and this is what is actually taking place today. Despite the persecution of these hundreds of thousands of religious minorities, the United States has not spoken out; but tonight the United States House of Representatives has. And this is a seminal moment for the House to have taken this on and to express unanimously that this is genocide.

There are many things that we have worked on together, as members of, and other members as well, of the House Religious Minority Caucus; humanitarian aid, protection, faster refugee processing for these vulnerable communities, and an official statement by the Congress. Tonight that happened. We have labeled these atrocities for what they are, genocide.

I think that Congressman FORTENBERRY has stated in a most eloquent way why this is important.

First of all, this is one of the great values of our country, one of the great, great values of our country, where we recognize religions of people of all religious backgrounds.

Our Constitution, in just a few words, in just a few words, I believe, has prevented bloodshed, whereas in other places, it takes place.

It is as deeply meaningful to me as a first-generation American, the only Member of the entire Congress that is of Assyrian and Armenian descent. This is a repeat of history of my family. It is why I am a first-generation

American, because my grandparents fled, both sides of my family, the Armenian side and the Assyrian side, for this very reason, because they were being hunted down and persecuted because they were Christians.

We know that a century ago the world witnessed—but the House and the Congress is still silent on this, and we have to address that, too—when the Ottoman Empire rounded up and murdered Armenians, Greeks, and other minorities in Constantinople. By 1923, there were some 1.5 million women, children, and men who were lost. It was a systematic campaign that we now know as and call the Armenian Genocide.

So for those in my family who told the stories, my grandparents, my parents, this is, for me, a bittersweet evening. But I think that they are all proud, those who have been called to God, and those who are still with us, that the United States House of Representatives is calling this out for what it is.

It matters when the United States speaks. Our voices collectively, this evening, are going to echo around the world; and the stability, as Congressman FORTENBERRY spoke to, of these minority communities, have really been the glue that have held these ancient communities together for so long.

I, too, share the hope and pray for the day that there will be peace in the region and that they will be recognized and honored in their communities, on the lands, these ancient lands, with their ancient faiths. I think that is the collective hope of all of us. The stability and, I think, the cultural identity of the Middle East depends on this.

The United States has always championed human rights, basic human rights, and civil and religious liberties, both at home and abroad. Whenever we go abroad, those are the issues that we raise with whomever we are meeting with. I think that these are our most cherished values and, I think, America's greatest export.

During his trip to South America in July of 2015, Pope Francis called for an end to this genocide of Christians in the Middle East, saying, "In this third world war which we are now experiencing, a form of genocide is taking place, and it must end."

I think his voice spoke, obviously, for the voiceless.

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, the Chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Church of Chicago, recently wrote in the Wall Street Journal the following:

"It may seem like we in the United States have little ability to change conditions in the Middle East and elsewhere. But that outlook has too often led to inaction and great regret after crimes against humanity have been allowed to unfold without intervention. The United States and other members of the U.N. made a solemn vow in 2005 with the passage of the Responsibility to Protect, a response to crimes against humanity. With genocide oc-

curing before our very eyes, we must properly identify the crimes and honor our international commitment under the Responsibility to Protect."

So, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, with the words of Pope Francis, Bishop Demetrios, countless advocates across our country and around the world, and the 203 bipartisan cosponsors of this resolution, and the voice of the entire House, unanimous vote this evening of this resolution, I am very proud.

I am very proud and I am lastingly grateful to be a part of this body that has spoken as one on this issue of enormous import and morality because we, tonight, have let it be known to the world that this is, in fact, the horror of genocide that is taking place in the Middle East.

Again, it is a moment of great pride to me, certainly to my family and to people, not only my own people, but to those across the United States, the religious leaders of all faiths that have spoken out.

This tonight, the evening of March 14, 2016, will live on and historians will record that we indeed did the right thing.

So I thank you all.

□ 1945

Historians will record that we indeed did the right thing. So I thank you all.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank the gentlewoman for your impactful, important, heartfelt, and beautiful words of sympathy and compassion, but also for your action.

What you said, particularly regarding not only respecting the ancient faith traditions, but honoring them in their native lands, ought to be what we are all striving for. So I thank you for your beautiful statements.

Now I would like to turn to my friend and colleague, Congressman TRENT FRANKS, a Congressman from Arizona who, again, has been a stalwart leader on all types of assaults to human dignity as they manifest themselves in so many difficult ways across the spectrum of life. So I am grateful for your friendship and for your leadership as well.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I thank Congressman FORTENBERRY especially for his leadership and courage on this issue. I thank Congresswoman ESHOO not only for her personal courage, but just for the perspective that she brings to this House given her ancestors and the family history that she has with some of the challenges that are so parallel to what we are talking about tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the United States of America has been the greatest national force for good the world has ever known. Our Nation has made sacrifices to the extreme to extinguish some of the worst evils that have plagued humanity across the decades. I am honored to stand here with my colleagues who have led this fight to call the Islamic States' insidious campaign

of terror against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious communities what it is: genocide.

For months, noble organizations like the Knights of Columbus and countless valiant individuals have worked tirelessly to document evidence of genocide against ancient faith communities in Iraq and Syria. Hundreds of pages containing accounts of massacres, unimaginable brutality, and uncovered mass graves have been delivered to world leaders, including the Obama administration, in an effort to condemn ISIS violence as the genocide that it most certainly is.

Recognition of genocide with the passage of H. Con. Res. 75 is due in large part to the conviction and commitment of these organizations and individuals—and for that humanity owes them great and profound gratitude. Yet today, despite all of the overwhelming evidence, this administration remains stunningly silent.

Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor and anti-Nazi dissident, who said: “Silence in the face of evil is evil itself: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”

Mr. Speaker, we are now witness to some of the most glaring and brutal attacks against the universal human right of religious freedom in history. ISIS has been the very face of evil. We have seen hundreds of thousands of civilians flee the land of their spiritual heritage. We have seen mass executions and beheadings. We have seen the destruction of ancient places of worship and sacred sites. We have seen women and children assaulted and sold as commodities in a modern-day slave market—sometimes little girls for as little as 50 cents.

We have seen the Islamic State desecrate, violate, humiliate, and strip innocent men, women, and children of their God-given human dignity. And why? Because there is no place for Christians, Yazidis, and other religious communities in the Islamic State's self-proclaimed caliphate. The message of this metastasizing cancer is clear: those who do not conform to their abhorrent ideology will be destroyed.

Mr. Speaker, this administration has been fully aware that Christians, Yazidis, and other religious communities have been subjected to the most extreme kind of brutality and barbaric attacks. The Islamic State has publicly declared their intent to annihilate those who do not submit to their caliphate, stating, “it will continue to wage war against the apostates until they repent from apostasy. It will continue to wage war against the pagans until they accept Islam.” Mr. Speaker, justice demands that this be condemned as genocide.

Today, the cries of the innocent should compel us to act. Refusal to acknowledge and specifically name Christians, Yazidis, and other religious communities in a designation of genocide

would be one of the more disgraceful chapters in the Obama administration's shameful and abhorrent response to the insidious evil of the Islamic State.

The conspicuous silence of this administration and its failure to act decisively not only has the gravest of implications for thousands of innocent fellow human beings, but it also sends a message to the world that the United States of America, which has long served as an impetus for freedom and justice, has either lost the moral conviction to defend the lives of the innocent or the political will to crush the evil that desecrates them.

Not to speak is to speak, Mr. Speaker. Not to act is to act, Mr. Speaker. And the world is watching what we will—or, shamefully, will not—say or do.

Mr. Speaker, I would adjure the President of the United States and Secretary Kerry not to callously continue to stand by in silence and let this evil relentlessly proceed.

With that, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank my friend, Congressman FRANKS of Arizona, for his powerful statement. Not to speak is to speak. Of all people in the body, I think that is a marked tribute to the Congressman who has worked tirelessly and spoken out on behalf of the protection of innocent persons.

Now I want to turn to my good friend, Congressman JUAN VARGAS from California, who as well has helped in an extraordinary way to further not only this cause, but, again, trying to elevate the nobility of the ideal that we should all be united in mind, heart, and spirit if we are going to be persons who respect the rules of law, the standards for international order, or, more basically, our need for one another.

I am so grateful for your willingness to speak out on a whole host of issues, and thank you for coming tonight, Congressman VARGAS.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you, very much, Congressman FORTENBERRY, and also ANNA ESHOO for your courage to come forward and for your words today and for your powerful words that you gave a moment ago to call genocide what it is: genocide, what we are seeing with Christians in particular, Yazidis, and others. So, again, thank you very much for allowing me to speak today.

I would also like to congratulate both of you on the passage of H. Con. Res. 75, which expresses the sense of Congress that the atrocities perpetrated by ISIS against religious and ethnic minorities are indeed, as I said, genocide, crimes against humanity. I sincerely hope that the Obama administration will see the bipartisan show of support for this timely resolution as an impetus to clearly and forthrightly declare these acts genocide, because that is what they are. So I am hoping that they take action.

Around the world, political and religious leaders have spoken out to con-

demn ISIS' acts of raping, kidnapping, torturing, and killing of Christians, Yazidis, Shias, Turks, and other religious minorities.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the European Parliament, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and His Holiness, Pope Francis have called these actions by their proper name: genocide—genocide.

I would like to echo the words of Pope Francis, who eloquently stated: “Our brothers are being persecuted, chased away, they are forced to leave their homes without being able to take anything with them. I assure these families that I am close to them and in constant prayer. I know how much you are suffering; I know that you are being stripped of everything.”

It has almost been 2 years since the fall of Mosul, when ISIS warned religious minorities living under its jurisdiction to either convert to Islam, pay a cumbersome religious tax, or be executed. I won't go through all the atrocious acts that they have committed. I think that they were spoken of already here in a very dramatic way. Again, they did what they said they were going to do; and that is ISIS said that, if you didn't leave, if you didn't convert, you would be executed. That is, in fact, what they have done in the most horrific way.

We have to act. It is time for us to act. I believe that this mass exodus represents the largest forced displacement in the Middle East since the Armenian genocide in Turkey 100 years ago.

A genocide, known as the crime of crimes, has both legal and moral implications under both Federal and international law. This means that if a genocide is declared, it will demand American leadership and resources to prevent and punish the ongoing assault of Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities that are targeted for extinction.

While I applaud the various actions and commitments the Obama administration has made to alleviate the suffering of thousands of victims of ISIS, I strongly and firmly believe we can, we should, and we must do more.

History is full of examples of leaders who opposed these mass atrocities in abstraction but similarly opposed any action in the moment. I call on President Obama and Secretary Kerry to take the first step in firmly calling this egregious situation a genocide. It is past time to speak the truth to power and not to mince any words, and we shouldn't mince any words.

Lastly, I would say this. This has been a bipartisan effort. I did have the opportunity to travel to Erbil with Congress Members DARRELL ISSA and JOHN MICA. We were able to talk to victims there of this horrific genocide, and we were able to talk to the Kurds who were, in fact, helping dramatically, many of them losing their own lives because they wanted to protect Christians and Yazidis.

We have to do more. Unfortunately, we probably won't get much information. Maybe if I went over and punched my good friend JEFF—out of love, of course, brother—maybe we could get some attention to this matter. But we have to shout out, and we have to get the attention of the administration. We have to do something. We have to do something because this is genocide, and we just can't sit idly by.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I want to thank my good friend, Congressman VARGAS, for your impactful words. If it does take your coming over here to punch me, come on, let's go, because that is worth it.

I want to also reiterate something I mentioned earlier. It was your resolution that called for an international humanitarian intervention that I feel created the environment, the condition, which was empowering to the Obama administration to intervene on behalf of the Yazidis trapped on Mount Sinjar. That is an overlooked fact and consideration around here. But I am glad to say it, and I want to thank you for calling as well, urging the administration to act in this regard. You have the moral authority to do so.

I know Secretary Kerry has sympathies in this regard, but just like the Yazidis when they were trapped on the mountain, to wait in the face of clear facts is to potentially not only lose time, but to lose lives and lose the option for, again, setting the preconditions for reintegration of these ancient faith traditions back into their ancestral homelands. So I thank you for your good words.

Now I want to turn to my good friend Congressman SEAN DUFFY from Wisconsin, an outspoken man of the House who has not been afraid to confront, as well, the various problems facing humanity and the assaults on human dignity as they have manifested themselves and fractured our society and so many others in so many ways. So I thank you, Congressman DUFFY.

Mr. DUFFY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's yielding, and I am grateful for all of your work, Congressman FORTENBERRY, Congressman VARGAS, and Congresswoman ESHOO.

Sometimes people look at this House and think that all we do is fight and disagree. I am not going to talk about you two punching each other to get a little more press, but it is a remarkable night when we all come together and stand together on such an important issue as this, where we all lend our voices to an incredibly important cause.

We spent a lot of time tonight talking about the atrocities, and I am going to join in because we can't say enough all that has happened.

Two million Christians called Iraq home prior to 2013. Fewer than 300,000 reside there today. Many were victims of killing or kidnappings, others forced to leave their homes by radicals, al Qaeda or ISIS.

In Syria, Christians accounted for 10 percent of the population, but today

their numbers have declined to less than 1 million. Last summer, ISIS kidnapped nearly 300 Christians in a Syrian village and then later ransomed them back to their families for an average of \$100,000 per person.

When ISIS invaded Mosul, Iraq, in 2013, as Mr. FORTENBERRY mentioned, they tagged Christian homes with an N for Nazarene, and then they gave the occupants a choice: you can convert, you can flee, or you would face death. In July of 2014, ISIS announced that the city, no doubt, was Christian-free—no surprise.

In 2014, August, a woman from Bartella, Iraq, recounted the night that ISIS came into her village and then into her home and accused her of putting gold coins in her 11-month-old baby's diaper. So they took her baby, threw her baby on the couch, beat her baby, and threw her up against the wall. Eventually, they let her leave, but they kept her husband and made him convert.

In February of 2015, ISIS slaughtered 21 Coptic Christians on a Libyan beach, pointing them towards Rome, and proclaimed this message: "Signed with blood to the nation of the cross."

In March of 2016, this month, four nuns, members of the Missionaries of Charity, founded by the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta, were executed by gunmen in Yemen.

□ 2000

Their crime? They were caring for the elderly and the disabled. Pope Francis called them today's martyrs.

Just yesterday gunmen stormed three hotels on the Ivory Coast. Among the 18 people who were killed was a 5-year-old boy—a 5-year-old boy—who was shot in the head. But eyewitnesses report that the friend who was with him was spared his life because he was able to recite a Muslim prayer.

Mr. Speaker, these are hardly isolated incidents. As we have talked about tonight, this is genocide. The Knights of Columbus submitted a 280-page report chronicling the persecution of Christians by the Islamic State to the State Department this week.

The leader of ISIS recently released a video that made very clear their intent to destroy Christians throughout whatever means possible. He said:

The co-existence of Christians and Jews is impossible, according to the Koran.

I don't think we have to scratch our heads and ask ourselves what is happening in Iraq and Syria. Pope Francis recently condemned the wholesale slaughter of Christians by ISIS, saying that entire Christian families and villages are being completely exterminated.

I look at this House tonight and I am proud that we have so many men and women who are willing to stand up and lend their voice to this great cause.

We have a reputation in America as being a beacon of light, men and women who stand up for freedom, better known as freedom fighters, freedom of life, freedom of religion.

When there are atrocities in the world, we stand up and lend a voice to those who are being persecuted, those who are downtrodden.

I am disappointed that the President has been unwilling to join this House and call the atrocities in Syria and Iraq a genocide. The first step to making sure this ends is that we speak the truth about what is actually happening.

Hopefully, if the President is watching tonight, he will see that we have both Republicans and Democrats who agree on this very important issue. Hopefully, he will join us and take that first step to shedding light on what is happening in Iraq and Syria.

Mr. FORTENBERRY, I commend you for your good efforts on this very important issue. I am proud to stand with you and the rest of this Chamber to make sure those who might not know that people care about them as they are going through pain and anguish—we hear about the sex slaves, young little girls who are held captive, little Christian and Yazidi girls—that they know that people hear them, people care about them, and people are doing here in America all we can to help them out of this crisis. Thank you for your work.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you for your powerful words, Congressman DUFFY. The report that you mentioned is right here. Again, it is a 280-page report submitted to the State Department just recently.

The cover shows that moment where these Coptic Christians from Egypt, who are guilty only of the crime of going to Libya to try to work and earn enough money to sustain their families, were captured by ISIS and then beheaded.

This report lays out the facts. It is not the opinion of the House of Representatives. It is not my opinion or yours. The fact is that this is a genocide.

I am grateful not only to the Knights of Columbus and the organization called In Defense of Christians for producing this, but it basically is a thorough documentation of what has happened that adds further credibility to what we already know and so many people around the world have called genocide.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK), my good friend.

Thank you for being here tonight.

Mrs. BLACK. I thank you, Mr. FORTENBERRY, for bringing us together to talk about a most serious topic, one that goes to our heart and makes us so sad for what is happening to these remarkable people who stand up for their faith.

Mr. Speaker, just today the Associated Press reported that President Obama would likely miss the March 17 deadline established by Congress for his administration to determine whether or not ISIS has committed genocide.

This is unfathomable. How long does it take for this President to call a spade a spade and declare what Americans already know to be true?

This isn't hard. ISIS is evil. They have engaged in systematic persecution and mass killing of Christians and other religious and ethnic minorities throughout the Middle East.

The United States has a moral responsibility to lead in the fight against ISIS, but we can't defeat a threat that we refuse to acknowledge exists.

I am proud to participate in tonight's Special Order and to support Congressman FORTENBERRY's resolution because we need to go on RECORD and declare the belief of crisis that ISIS has without a doubt committed genocide and must be dealt with accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, we in the United States cannot turn a blind eye when our brothers and sisters around the world are murdered, tortured, and kidnapped for their faith.

It is long past time to dispense with this hyper-political correctness and to call these heinous acts by their true name. These are crimes against humanity. Stopping the violence starts with acknowledging this truth.

I thank Congressman FORTENBERRY for his leadership on this much-needed resolution.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Congresswoman BLACK, for your leadership not only on this issue, but so many others.

We often are in very important economic debates, debates about finances and debates about roads. Not often enough, perhaps, do we go to the core of the reason for which exists a country and its laws, namely, to protect human dignity. I want to thank you for your leadership in this regard. Thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS), my good friend, for his good words.

Let me again thank you for your leadership. Your consistency and the continuity in which you apply your principles is very noble and uplifting to me.

Mr. ROTHFUS. I want to thank my friend, Congressman FORTENBERRY, for the steadfast witness that you have given to this cause and other causes of human dignity and to call us together again after this historic House vote today where the House stands in solidarity with the suffering victims of the Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to condemn in no uncertain terms the slaughter of Middle Eastern Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq, Syria, and the region held by ISIS.

These are crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. Everyone should denounce this senseless brutality. The United States and the United Nations should officially recognize the mass murder of Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East as acts of genocide.

We do not hear about this massacre often enough from the media. While

many Americans may never have met someone from the Middle East, we are all part of the same human family. Christians in America may be set apart from our brothers and sisters in the Middle East geographically, but we worship the same God and are connected in our humanity.

We owe these suffering men, women, and children the greatest reverence and gratitude for their fortitude as they endure killings, displacement from their homes, forced migration, sexual exploitation, destruction of their property, and endure bodily and mental harm.

We must not remain silent as we live in the comfort of a Nation where our liberties are protected by the law and our culture, to a much greater degree, permits us to peacefully live out our faith.

I recall the words from 2001 of Pope John Paul II, Bishop of Rome, and His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch of all Armenians, as they commemorated the sacrifices of the Armenian Christians who were also brutalized by genocide for their faith:

Endowed with great faith, they chose to bear witness to the truth and accept death when necessary in order to share eternal life.

The most valuable treasure that one generation could bequeath to the next was fidelity to the gospel so that the young would become as resolute to their ancestors in bearing witness to the truth.

The extermination of a million and a half Armenian Christians in what is generally referred to as the first genocide of the 20th century and the subsequent annihilation of thousands under the former totalitarian regime are tragedies that still live in the memory of the present-day generation.

Fifteen years later their words still ring true as entire communities of Christians and other religious minorities are ravaged by genocide and religious persecution in the Middle East.

This persecution at the hands of ISIS is so horrific that, as Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill said last month in a joint statement:

Whole families, villages, and cities of our brothers and sisters in Christ are being completely exterminated.

It is intolerable to remain silent and turn a blind eye. Silence and the failure to accurately identify not some, but all, of the victims of this genocide condemns these innocent people to a future of continued brutality, destruction, isolation, and genocide.

All religious minorities in the Middle East deserve religious freedom and the ability to live peacefully within their communities, as they have done for centuries. We will continue to stand in solidarity with them and to denounce the war crimes and genocide being committed against the law.

I want to end with two words, Mr. Speaker, two words: moral clarity. This is the time, Mr. Speaker, for moral clarity. Today this House spoke. The whole world now watches. We need the administration to speak.

I thank my friend.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Congressman ROTHFUS, for your power-

ful words, and thank you for reminding us that this is about the essence of what it means to be human, to stand in solidarity with people far, far away who we may never know, but whose fate and our fate should be intertwined because of our mutual concern not only for one another from the heart, but also for the structures that give rise to essential principles, such as religious liberty. Thank you for your good words.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. COMSTOCK), my good friend.

Thank you for your tireless efforts as well on this resolution. Behind the scenes you have worked very aggressively in this regard.

While it has been stated clearly that ANNA ESHOO and I led this, nonetheless, your work in compelling Members to be involved in this question and raising consciousness has been invaluable. Thank you so much.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank him for his very important work on this vital issue of religious freedom.

I know how closely you worked with my predecessor, Congressman Frank Wolf, who continues this fight for religious freedom now in his retirement from Congress, but his very active work that continues on this important issue.

I rise to recognize the ongoing struggle for human and religious rights in the Middle East and call on the administration to make a genocide designation for the war crimes committed by ISIS against the Christians and other religious and ethnic groups.

We had the resolution that we passed tonight, and I thank all of my colleagues for that unanimous vote that really should speak to the entire country, but also to the entire world, to everybody who is asking: When is there going to be help? When are people going to hear our cries of anguish?

This resolution had over 200 cosponsors, which I was proud to join the gentleman and so many of my colleagues here tonight and express the sense of Congress that those who commit or support atrocities against Christians, Yazidis, Kurds, and other religious minorities in the region and those who target them specifically for ethnic or religious reasons are committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

ISIS has beheaded young children, raped young girls, and systematically slaughtered people just because of the religion they practice.

This is 2016. I remember as a young girl in Catholic school when we would study the martyrs and you would think about those ancient times and how the first Christians had to suffer and be martyred like that.

And then we see four nuns, Sisters of Charity, just trying to help the aged, the infirm, and they are slaughtered in the name of their faith.

We need to have more people hearing about this and focusing on this. At this



time when we have so many side shows that we see the press covering every single day, this is something that they need to be dedicating their time and their resources to and to be using this mass media that we have in so many different mediums to get this word out and understand these atrocities that are going on.

I commend Time magazine for featuring a young Yazidi woman. I believe it was last December. She was named Nadia. Her firsthand account was chilling, a 21-year-old girl. She testified what these monsters had done to her and her family.

When she tried to escape and was recaptured, she recounted her story by saying: “That night, he beat me up”—this was the person who was keeping her in slavery—“forced me to undress and put me in a room with six militants. They continued to commit crimes to my body until I became unconscious.”

□ 2015

She spoke of her niece, who had also been kidnapped, who had witnessed a woman who was cutting her own wrists, trying to kill herself. They heard stories of women who jumped from bridges. In one house in Mosul, where Nadia was kept, an upstairs room was smeared with evidence of suffering. “‘There was blood, and there were fingerprints of hands with the blood on the walls,’ she says. Two women had killed themselves there” so they wouldn’t have to suffer anymore.

“Nadia never considered ending her own life, but she said she wished the militants would do it for her. ‘I did not want to kill myself’”—of course, her faith wouldn’t allow it—“but I wanted them to kill me” so she wouldn’t end up suffering.

Now she is out there telling the world about this, and we need to listen. The European Parliament, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Iraqi and Kurdish Governments all have labeled these actions as genocide. Now we in the House are on record also.

These terrorist organizations are not only persecuting Christians, but Jews, Yazidis, and so many others, as so many of my colleagues have discussed tonight, they also have killed thousands upon thousands of Muslims who refuse to pledge allegiance to their tormentors’ extremist views.

Last week, the organization of the Knights of Columbus in Defense of Christians released a detailed, 278-page report, as Mr. FORTENBERRY, my colleague, has outlined.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD the executive summary from the report that details the actions that constitute genocide. I certainly would recommend, like the gentleman did, that people look at this detailed report, and I would ask that the press cover this.

# A REPORT SUBMITTED TO SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY BY THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS AND IN DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ISIS is committing genocide—the “crime of crimes”—against Christians and other religious groups in Syria, Iraq and Libya. It is time for the United States to join the rest of the world by naming it and by taking action against it as required by law.

ISIS’ activities are well known. Killings, rapes, torture, kidnappings, bombings and the destruction of religious property and monuments are, in some instances, a matter of public record. The European Parliament, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, and the Iraqi and Kurdish governments have labeled ISIS’ actions genocide. Political leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights—have done likewise.

Indeed, Secretary of State John Kerry in August 2014 stated: “ISIS’s campaign of terror against the innocent, including Yezidi (sic) and Christian minorities, and its grotesque and targeted acts of violence bear all the warning signs and hallmarks of genocide.” Pope Francis and Cyril, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, have decried the genocide in these countries against Christians and other religious groups. Most movingly, archbishops and patriarchs of ancient Christian communities in Syria and Iraq have spoken out clearly against this crime and cried over the blood of their people and ISIS’ efforts to rid their homelands forever of the Christian faithful.

None of these declarations of genocide excluded Christians, who, with the other religious minorities in the region, have endured targeted attacks at the hands of this radical group and its affiliates because of their religious beliefs.

On February 4, the Knights of Columbus co-authored a letter to Secretary Kerry requesting a meeting to brief him on evidence that established that the situation confronting Christians and other religious minorities constitutes genocide. While there has never been an official response to that letter, we were contacted by senior State Department officials who requested our assistance in making the case that Christians are victims of genocide at the hands of ISIS. Given the specificity of the information requested, our focus in this report is on the situation confronting Christians in areas that are or have been under ISIS control, primarily in Iraq, Syria and Libya.

ISIS has also targeted Yazidis and other religious minority groups in a manner consistent with genocide. Thus, our contention is not that Christians should be designated as the sole group facing genocide, but rather, that given the overwhelming evidence and the international consensus on this issue, that the United States government should not exclude Christians from such a finding. Doing so would be contrary to fact. The evidence we are presenting to the State Department has three major components:

1. An executive summary
2. A legal brief detailing the case for genocide against Christians
3. Substantial addenda, including original source material, reports, from NGOs documenting the situation, evidence provided to the European Parliament during their consideration of this issue, lists of atrocities, and similar data

A genocide determination requires two specific aspects: intent on the part of those committing genocide and genocidal acts. Both are addressed at length in the attached brief.

Genocide is a crime defined by federal statute and international law. We are asking that Christians be included in finding of genocide and that a recommendation be made for investigation and, in proper cases, for indictment of those responsible. This is required when there is probable cause to believe an offense has been committed by the accused parties. Probable cause is a low standard. When there is probable cause, the duties of the President and the Secretary of State under 22 U.S.C. §8213 and the Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987, 18 U.S.C. §§1091-93 require the collection of information “regarding incidents that may constitute . . . genocide,” 22 U.S.C. §8213, and then the President “shall consider what actions can be taken to ensure that [those] who are responsible for . . . genocide . . . are brought to account for such crimes in an appropriately constituted tribunal.” 28 U.S.C. §8213(b).

As in any indictment, a finding of probable cause would allow the State Department to report to Congress that it believes genocide has occurred and to recommend that this be proven conclusively through a court process.

It should also be noted that a finding of genocide does not require the killing of an entire group. The words of the U.N. Convention on Genocide and the U.S. statute based on it are clear that what is required are acts aimed at destroying a group “in whole or in part.” Both the drafting history of the U.N. Convention and its application by courts around the world have rightly shown that destruction “in part” is sufficient to a finding of genocide.

Similarly, there is ample precedent for finding that forced deportation—often in concert with killing, rape and other forms of violence—qualifies as genocide.

As to the issue of intent, it should be noted that individual accounts, the collective evidence and ISIS’ own public statements make clear that it targets Christians and seeks to destroy Christianity in the lands they control and beyond.

ISIS’ magazine is called Dabiq, named after the place where ISIS believes it will win a battle against the army of Rome. It routinely refers to Dabiq as the location where it will destroy the “Crusader army,” an unmistakable Christian reference. The magazine last year published a picture of Pope Francis, captioning him as “the crusader pope.” Dabiq proclaims ISIS’ intention to destroy Christians:

We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by the permission of Allah, the Exalted. This is His promise to us; He is glorified and He does not fail in His promise. If we do not reach that time, then our children and grandchildren will reach it, and they will sell your sons as slaves at the slave market.

Finally, this certainty is the one that should pulse in the heart of every mujihid from the Islamic State and every supporter outside until he fights the Roman crusaders near Dabiq.

It has also stated:

And nothing changes for the Islamic State, as it will continue to pronounce takfir [abandonment of Islam] upon the Jews, the Christians, the pagans, and the apostates from the Rāfidah, the Nusayriyyah, the Sahwah, and the tawāghit [disbelievers]. It will continue to wage war against the apostates until they repent from apostasy. It will continue to wage war against the pagans until they accept Islam. It will continue to wage war against the Jewish state until the Jews hide behind their gharqad trees. And it will continue to wage war against the Christians until the truce decreed sometime before the Malhamah. Thereafter, the slave markets will commence in Rome by Allah’s power and might.

Elsewhere, Dābiq states ISIS' desire to target Christians under any number of ruses. In addition, a video released just last month by ISIS in Libya states that its adherents should "Fight and kill them from their Great Priest (Tawadros II) to the most pathetic one." A second speaker calls for Egyptians to "terrorize the Jews and burn the slaves of the Cross."

ISIS statements related to the beheading of the Coptic Christians brand Christians as "polytheists" for their belief in the Trinity, making Christians the same as "pagans" in their view.

The plain meaning of these statements, especially in context, is clear: The so-called Caliphate has slated Christianity for destruction—now and in an apocalyptic battle to come.

Consistent with its threats have been ISIS' actions. Our fact-finding mission to Iraq earlier this month found stories of rape, kidnapping, forced conversions and murder, in addition to property confiscation and forced expulsion. Almost everything we discovered has not been previously reported.

What is publicly known and what our investigation uncovered is substantial, but it has become clear that this still represents only the tip of the iceberg. We are now being sent new stories and new evidence daily. So what is known about ISIS' genocidal atrocities will only increase, and the known scale of the horrors that have occurred can only expand with time.

The victims we met or learned of were many. Their stories were of traumatic experiences they and others had endured. There were also the stories of those who could no longer tell them—the killed and the missing. Some of those we learned about had been wounded physically or emotionally, or both.

The story of the mother whose child was taken from her arms by ISIS has been reported in the media. We found that her experience was not isolated. Similar reports of family members, adults and children alike, were common.

Those we interviewed showed great strength. And some showed great heroism as well, despite the dangers to themselves. There was Khalia, a woman in her fifties, who was captured and held hostage along with 47 others. During her 15 days in captivity, she rebuffed demands to convert, despite a gun being put to her head and a sword to her neck. She literally fought off ISIS militants as they tried to rape the girls, and again later when they tried to take a 9-year-old as a bride. Because of the abuse, 14 men gave in to ISIS' demands and said they would convert to Islam. Khalia would not. Ultimately, the hostages were left in the desert to walk to Erbil. Others in Kurdistan affirmed without prompting that "she had saved many people."

Like the Yazidis, Christian women face sexual slavery, a main tool the "Caliphate" uses to recruit young men and to exterminate religious groups. A now infamous ISIS slave menu lists the prices by age for "Christian or Yazidi" women on sale in their slave markets.

Murder of Christians is commonplace. Many have been killed in front of their own families. The Syriac Catholic Patriarch of Antioch, many of whose flock lived on the Nineveh plain or in Syria, reports that 500 people were killed by ISIS during its takeover of Mosul and the surrounding region. In Syria, where the organization Aid to the Church in Need has reported on mass graves of Christians, Patriarch Younan estimates the number of Christians "targeted and killed by Islamic terrorist bands" at more than 1,000.

Melkite Catholic Archbishop Jean-Clément Jeanbart of Aleppo estimates the number of

Christians kidnapped and/or killed in his city as in the hundreds, with as many as "thousands" killed throughout Syria.

In Nineveh, many more were taken hostage seemingly at random, or demanded as hostages in exchange for their families to leave. Many of these have not been heard from thereafter.

Shockingly, some see what is happening at the hands of ISIS as not genocidal to Christians. At the root of this argument seems to be the idea that Christians have not been targeted in the same way as others. This is not true. First, Christians have been attacked throughout the region, not simply in the Nineveh area or only during the summer of 2014. Christians have been attacked and killed by ISIS and its affiliates in Syria, Libya, Yemen and surrounding areas. Even before ISIS was constituted, Christians found themselves victims of its predecessors: the Islamic State in Iraq, Al Qaeda and other radical groups.

Some argue that Christians should be excluded from a genocide declaration because ISIS supposedly allows Christians to pay jizya—a tax historically made available in Islam to Christians in Muslim lands—while denying this option to groups like the Yazidis, who are considered "pagans" by Islam.

The premise is false, because what ISIS calls jizya is not comparable to the historical understanding of that term. Rather, jizya—like so many theological concepts that ISIS holds—can mean something contrary to historic Islamic practice, or it can mean nothing at all. As used by ISIS, it is almost always a term for extortion and a prelude or postscript to ISIS violence against Christians.

In Nineveh, demands for so-called jizya payments were a prelude to killings, kidnappings, rapes and the dispossession of the Christian population. Not surprisingly, the Christian negotiator Father Emmanuel Adelkello and the other Christians saw this as a "a ploy from which ISIS could keep the Christians there to further take advantage of them and abuse them."

In Raqqa, the offer was made after ISIS had already closed the churches, burned bibles and kidnapped the town's priests.

It is little wonder that Alberto Fernandez—Middle East scholar and, until recently, a coordinator of U.S. government ideological counterterrorism messaging—found ISIS jizya to be "more a Satan Caliphate publicity stunt than a careful recreation of jizya as practiced by the early Caliphs." He added that this shows that ISIS is not similar "to the sprawling pluralistic caliphates of history."

Furthermore, self-styled ISIS Caliph Abu Omar al-Baghdadi has admitted for nearly a decade that Christians no longer qualify for the historical protection offered by Islamic law. And under his leadership, during the Islamic State's attack on Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad in 2010, "the gunmen made at least four claims [justifications] for the killings, two general and two specific: all of the Christians were infidels; it is permitted to kill them; the killing was in retaliation for the burning of a Koran by an American pastor, and was also in retaliation for the alleged imprisonment of two supposed Muslim women converts in Egypt."

The Knights of Columbus became involved in supporting Christians and other religious minorities in this region because of our long-standing humanitarian activity and support for religious freedom at home and around the world.

Beginning in 2014, our organization began raising money for refugee relief in the Middle East. These funds have helped Christian, as well as Yazidi and Muslim, individuals

and families. We have provided funding for general relief in Aleppo; education for refugees now living in Jordan; and food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care in Kurdistan. One of the clinics we fund in Dohuk has been visited by several Yazidi women who recently escaped ISIS sexual slavery, and it has referred them for psychological or specialist medical treatment. To date the K of C has raised more than \$8 million for this cause.

Long before our involvement on behalf of Christians in the Middle East, the Knights of Columbus stood with persecuted Christians around the world. In the 1920s, we raised awareness and lobbied the American government to help stop the persecution of Catholics in Mexico under the government of Plutarco Calles. In the 1930s the K of C successfully fought against Mussolini's attempted closure of our charitable work in Italy, and throughout the Cold War we stood in solidarity with, lobbied for and supported those who were not permitted to practice their faith in the Communist bloc.

Today, the threat is the global persecution of Christians, which the Pew Forum and The New York Times have described as occurring at an unparalleled level. What is happening in the Middle East is a microcosm of this, and perhaps its clearest example. It is for this reason that we have partnered with In Defense of Christians in producing this report and sponsoring the national television advertising campaign in support of the petition located at [www.StopTheChristianGenocide.com](http://www.StopTheChristianGenocide.com).

It is our hope that our efforts in this regard will be helpful in highlighting and bettering the plight faced at the hands of IS by religious minorities—including Christians. And it is our belief that a declaration of genocide is a key component in that process.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, the law states that the President shall consider what actions can be taken to ensure that those who are responsible for genocide are brought to account for such crimes in an appropriate constituted tribunal.

Further, the President is required to develop a clear strategy to stop these organizations based on the most recent iteration of the National Defense Authorization Act that was passed in November.

As I mentioned earlier, since his retirement from Congress, my predecessor, Congressman Wolf, has worked tirelessly on these issues. I am so pleased, and I know he will be so pleased, to see so many of his former colleagues and all of us who were able to pass this unanimously this evening. I thank him for his strong voice and for all of the strong voices who were here tonight so that we can, once again, be standing throughout this country and throughout the world as that beacon of light which so many of my colleagues have talked about.

I thank the gentleman for having this Special Order today. I just close in asking for prayer for all of those who are suffering around the world and for all of those souls who have been tormented, tortured, and killed.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank Congresswoman COMSTOCK for her powerful words and her faithful leadership. The gentlewoman had big shoes to fill after Frank Wolf's retirement, and I am sure



tonight, if he is watching, he would be very proud of her efforts in this regard and in so many others, leading the fight to try to stop the assaults on human dignity.

Mr. Speaker, when I was a much younger man, I entered the Sinai Desert in Egypt. The year was 1979. I was a college student. At the site of the fighting that had taken place between Israel and Egypt in the 1973 war, there was an all-too-familiar scene of a concrete pile of rubble. Scrawled on the side of the concrete pile, both in Arabic and in English, were the words: "Here was the war, and here is the peace."

Mr. Speaker, maybe, just maybe, on this, the remnants of this Christian church where this cross was planted by this Yazidi man who returned to his hometown of Sinjar just recently in January, one day will see those same words that here was the war, but now here is the peace.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on S. 2426.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRAT). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nebraska?

There was no objection.

#### CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS—THE WORK CONTINUES: WHY VOTING MATTERS IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. BEATTY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to add any extraneous materials relevant to the subject matter of this discussion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening for tonight's Congressional Black Caucus Special Order Hour: The Work Continues—Why Voting Matters in the African American Community.

I am so proud to join my classmate, Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES from the Eighth District of New York. He is a member of the House Judiciary Committee. He continues to be a tireless advocate for social justice, working to reform our criminal justice system and to eliminate the overcriminalization of the African American community.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to discuss the current state of voting rights in America, which, unfortunately, are under assault. The freedom to vote is one of America's most fundamentally, constitutionally guaranteed rights. It was 51 years ago this month, Mr. Speaker, that over 600 peaceful, orderly protesters set off to march from Selma, Alabama, to the State capitol in Montgomery to demonstrate the need for voting rights in the State.

Last week, our Congressional Black Caucus chair, Chairman BUTTERFIELD, stated at the first in a series of CBC hearings about the current state of voting rights in America and that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is probably one of the most significant pieces of legislation that was ever passed in the United States Congress.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, as we know, in 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down this crucial provision of the Voting Rights Act in the Shelby County v. Holder decision. Our work continues because by invalidating section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, the Supreme Court opened the doors for ways to reduce the voting power of minority communities and it put in place new voting restrictions in an effort to make it harder for millions of Americans to vote.

Our democracy has far too many missing voices, particularly those who are already at a disadvantage due to deep-rooted racial and class barriers in our society. By exercising our right, we can do great things. We can hold this country accountable. We can advocate for legislation that supports social and economic progress, equality and fairness for all Americans. We can champion policies that create and sustain jobs and that protect against cuts to social and economic programs that are vital to our most at-risk populations. We can move forward on efforts to address the school-to-prison pipeline and criminal justice reform. We know that the inequalities in access to quality health care still exist between races and that more and more Black children are victims of failing schools.

Mr. Speaker, I am calling on all citizens, including on our community and national leaders, to join the Congressional Black Caucus to work to eliminate voter suppression and to restore what so many people fought for, marched, and died for—yes, the Voting Rights Act. It is up to all of us to protect the most at-risk among us and to expand opportunity for all people. That begins with passing a voting rights act. Our work still continues, Mr. Speaker.

This week, we are celebrating Women's History Month, and I must note the powerful impact that African American women are having at the polls. In the past two Presidential elections, Black women led all demographic groups in voter turnout. That is why voting matters to African American communities. Black women make up the most dynamic segment of the rising American voters. A great civil rights leader said that women are

among the greatest leaders of social reform, and they are fighting, literally fighting, for their political rights.

This past Saturday I had the opportunity to be with the mothers of the movement. We know who they are. They are the mothers of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Dontre Hamilton, Jordan Davis, Sandra Bland, and Hadiya Pendleton; and we have all heard what happened to their children.

As a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, we are calling for action on gun control. We need to do more than just stand up on this floor for a moment of silence. We need to make sure that we are passing gun control legislation, commonsense legislation, that keeps the guns out of the hands of the most dangerous individuals. It is time for us to protect our children.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to give you some examples of what we should include in our call for action.

I go first to my good friend and colleague and classmate who brought it to my attention that we stand up for a moment, and then we sit down. Then we come back to this floor, and it is business as usual. We talk about wanting to keep our families safe, and we talk about the mental health issues. That is all we do, Mr. Speaker. We talk about it.

Congresswoman ROBIN KELLY of Illinois' Second District has legislation, H.R. 224, which would require the Surgeon General of Public Health Services to submit to Congress an annual report on the effects of gun violence on public health. This bill has 140 Democrat cosponsors. I am asking my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to step up and do more than just stand up for 30 seconds.

I am calling on Congress to act on Congressman JAMES CLYBURN of the Sixth District of South Carolina's legislation, H.R. 3051, the Background Check Completion Act, which would guarantee that no gun is sold by a licensed dealer until a background check is completed.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that I am a cosponsor of both of these bills.

I will go on and tell you about Chairman BUTTERFIELD, the chair of our Congressional Black Caucus. He understands that our work continues, because he has focused his efforts on promoting anti-poverty programs and on expanding economic development and job creation. There are a number of things that have happened in his State.

For example, the Moral Mondays are protests in North Carolina that are led by religious progressives. These protests are in response to several actions by the government of North Carolina, which was elected into office in 2013. These events, which spread throughout the South, helped bring attention to voting rights, criminal justice reform, and workers' rights. I think it is very important for us to note that.

Mr. Speaker, tonight my coanchor and I will talk about a number of